1: Butt E-4 (no date) 1952 FL11 Luo FL11

[pp. 1-107 not processed]

THE LUO OF KENYA

GENERAL(4)

[101] 133 The Luo; or Nilotic Kavirondo, inhabit the territories bordering Victoria Nyanza, north and south of the Kavirondo Gulf. Kavirondo is in the south, a flat plain relieved by a few rocky tors and ridges upon which the people build their homesteads; in the north the country is hilly. The rolling, grassy savannahs, the swamps, numerous water-courses and patches of thornwood forest make it comparable to the environments of the other more northern Nilotic tribal groups.

●105 The country is suitable for pastoral and agricultural activities, and the lake is rich in fish. The people are mainly agricultural and grain foods form the chief part of their diet. Cattle, sheep and goats are kept. Cattle are the chief criterion of wealth. Women and girls are strictly forbidden to have anything to do with them and there is every indication that cattle enter into the social life of the people to the same degree as among the Nuer and Dinka. Fishing plays a large part in

(1) Driberg, *The Lango*, 1923, pp.148-52.
(2) *Ibid.*, p.152. (3) *Ibid.*, pp.166-7.
(4) Except for three articles by Evans-Pritchard, there is practically no information on the Luo of Kenya.

[p.108]

economic activities and although, formerly, there were organised hunts, today hunting is not much practised. 105

LUO EXPANSION

Until the time of European intervention the Luo appear to have been gradually expanding towards the south. This resulted in their division into two parts (on the north and south of the Kavirondo Gulf) namely: the Luo of Central Kavirondo and the Luo of Southern Kavirondo. Evans-Pritchard writes, "The southwards migration seems to have been across the Gulf from Uyoma and Asembo to Karacuonyo, and not round it, and to have taken place over several generations, commencing, if genealogies are to be trusted, about seven generations ago. Across the Gulf the Luo came up against the Bantu (Mwa) and Nilo-Hamitic (Langu) tribes."(1) The assimilation and absorption of these tribes was incomplete at the time of European occupation of the country. During this process of expansion there was a considerable dispersal of lineages so that lineages of the same clan are found in both Central and South Kavirondo. The Luo tribes least influenced by the Bantu are the Uyoma, Seme and Asembo and such tribes as pushed the southernmost Luo into Bantu country. 174

SOCIAL ORGANISATION AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE

At the present time Luoland is divided into a number of administrative locations which vary considerably in area and population. These locations, according to Evans-Pritchard, correspond approximately to the old tribal areas of the Luo. The expansion of the Luo has divided them into two main groups with Kisumu location forming a narrow territorial link between them: 631 101

1. The Luo of Central Kavirondo, known as *Joiye* (the inside people).

2. The Luo of Southern Kavirondo, known as *Jooko* (the outside people).(2)

THE TRIBE *(Piny)*

Among the Luo the tribe is an autonomous political unit. Like the Nuer tribes it may be defined in terms of the way in which homicide was formerly regarded and treated. 619 682

Compensation for homicide *(cut)* takes the form of handing over cattle, or a girl, to the kinsmen of a slain man so that heirs may be raised for him. Compensation is only paid for the killing of a tribesman, for men of other tribes, slain in war, raids or private conflict, are regarded as *wasigu*, enemies. On the other hand, compensation is not paid for killing a clansman, for such a deed is regarded as a sin, and propitiation and atonement have to be made by the sacrifice of an ox provided by the imme-

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal*, 1949, No.VII, p.2.
(2) *Ibid.*

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1936) 1949
FL11 Luo FL11

LUO TRIBES AND CLANS

by

E. E. EVANS-PRITCHARD

IN 1936 I had an opportunity, through the generosity of the Leverhulme Grants Committee, to spend a few weeks in Kenya. In the conditions then prevailing in that colony the Kenya Government considered it unwise for me to visit either the Masai or the Turkana, as had been my intention, so I decided that my time would be best employed in making a short survey of the Luo people, very little having been written about them and much of that of poor quality. [1]

Some six weeks were spent in Luoland. In view of the shortness of time at my disposal, made yet shorter by exceptionally severe fever, my enquiry was limited to certain features of Luo social organization. It was particularly directed towards a survey of political structure to discover how similar was Luo political structure to that of the Lango, Nuer, Anuak, and other Nilotic peoples. Some of the results of this survey are now recorded. They would have been published earlier had not the war prevented my giving any attention to anthropological studies. Statements made in this paper refer to 1936.

I had hoped that the Ven. Archdeacon W. E. Owen, who knew the Luo better than anyone has known them, would have read this article. The Archdeacon died in 1945. I am most grateful to him and to Mrs. Owen, for without their support I would certainly not have been able to make so rapid a survey. My thanks are also due to the many Luo who, largely out of regard for the Archdeacon and Mrs. Owen, assisted me in my enquiry.

The Luo of Kenya are a Nilotic people of some 500,000 souls bordering Lake Victoria Nyanza to the north and south of Kavirondo Gulf. Some outlying sections also stretch into Tanganyika. The parts of Luoland which lie back from the lake, e.g. Alego and Ugenya tribal areas, are undulating country in which the homesteads are built along the slopes (*thuce*, sing. *thur*. also meaning 'home') of the successive ridges. The country near the lake is less broken. The rainfall is everywhere heavy and well-distributed. The people are mainly agricultural, though they keep

[1] C.W. HOBLEY, 'Kavirondo', *The Geographical Journal*, 1898; Sir HARRY JOHNSTON, *The Uganda Protectorate*, Vol. II, Chap. XVIII, 1902; C. W. HOBLEY, 'Eastern Uganda', *Occasional Papers of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, No 1, 1902; G. A. S NORTHCOTE, 'The Nilotic Kavirondo', *J.R.A.I.* 1907; The Rev. N. STAM, 'The Religious Conceptions of the Kavirondo', *Anthropos*, 1910; C. M. DOBBS, 'Fishing in Kavirondo Gulf', *J.E.A.U.N.H.S.*, 1927; The Rev. H. HARTMANN, 'Some Customs of the Luwo (or Nilotic Kavirondo) living in South Kavirondo', *Anthropos*, 1928; K. C. SHAW, 'Luo Marriage Customs', *J.E.A.U.N.H.S.* 1932; Archdeacon W. E. OWEN, 'Food Production and kindred Matters amongst the Luo', *J.E.A.U.N.H.S.*, 1933.

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1936) 1949
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many cattle, sheep, and goats and most of their country is suitable for a pastoral life. Fishing plays a big part in the economy of the lakeside tribes. Hunting is little practised to-day, but in the old days organized battues were a regular feature.

The homestead, the residence of an elementary family or joint family, is generally called *dala*, a Bantu word, but in the more purely Luo parts of the country the Nilotic word *pacho* (pl. *mier*) is used, especially by the older men. It is usually surrounded by a thick hedge of euphorbia, a narrow gap in which is the entrance to the kraal, round which are the huts and granaries. Nothing is said about the domestic life of such homesteads nor of kinship life in this article, for its purpose is to outline the nature of the larger structural groups.

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At the present time Luoland is divided into a number of administrative locations. These locations, shown on the map, vary considerably in size of area and population. According to official returns most have populations of under 20,000 and the only two with populations of over 30,000 are Alego (53,604 with density of 244 to the square mile) and Samia (41,011 with density of 193). Density of population is greatest in some of the fertile northerly locations: North Ugenya (29,363 with density of 515), South Ugenya (7,497 with density of 341), and North Gem (29,014 with density of 387). It is lowest in some of the lakeside locations in South Kavirondo: Kasingiri (1,904 with density of 12), Kasigunga (2,041 with density of 21), and Gwasi (4,934 with density of 42).

These locations correspond approximately with the old tribal areas of the Luo. The main differences are that in South Kavirondo Karacuonyo location (28,207 with density of 167), Mumbo location (26,465 with density of 174), and Kabondo location (7,926 with density of 126) comprised a single tribe, as did North Gem and South Gem (19,442 with density of 237), North Ugenya and South Ugenya, and West Kano (28,617 with density of 265) and East Kano (25,730 with density of 158).

It is beyond question that the whole of Luoland was once occupied by Bantu and Nilo-Hamitic tribes and that the pressure which has continued, particularly against the Bantu, on the confines of Luoland to the north, east, and south, almost up to the present day is the end of a gradual process of expansion and assimilation. The Luo have been greatly influenced by Bantu culture during its development.

The expansion of the Luo towards the south has resulted in their division into two parts between which Kisumu location forms a narrow bridge, the Luo of Central Kavirondo, the *Joiye*, the 'Inside People', and the Luo of South Kavirondo, the *Jooko*, the 'Outside People'. The southwards migration seems to have been across the gulf from Uyoma and Asembo to Karacuonyo, and not round it and to have taken place over several generations, commencing, if the genealogies are to be trusted about seven generations ago. Across the gulf the Luo came up against Bantu (*Mwa*) and Nilo-Hamitic (*Langu*) tribes. The conquest and cultural

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Identification

The Luo (Jaluo, Luwo, Nyifwa, Nilotic Kavirondo) include numerous small tribes totaling about 800,000 in population (in 1947) and speaking related languages of the Nilotic subdivision of the Southern branch of the East Sudanic linguistic stock. They include two detached groups--a rearguard tribe in Uganda called Jopadhola (Dama) and an advance-guard tribe in the south called Gaya (Girange, Wageia). Of the main body, those mentioned incidentally by Butt--the Alego, Asembo, Seme, and Uyoma--do not coincide with any mentioned by other authors: Gem, Kabwoc, Kadem, Kano, Kanyada, Kangadoto, Kanyamwa, Karacuonyo, Kocia, Kurungu, Kwabwai, Nyakac, and Sakwa. The reason is presumably that "tribe" in most cases applies only to a local community.

Basic Economy

Primarily agricultural, with a strong secondary dependence upon animal husbandry. The staple crop is "grain" (Meinhardt), "millet" (Stigler), "mtama" (Hobley), but sweet potatoes, maize, pumpkins, beans, sesame, a little "wimbi," (and a very few bananas are also raised. Cattle (very numerous before the 1890-91 cattle plague), sheep, goats, dogs (for hunting), and chickens are kept. Butter is made. Milk and blood drawn from living cattle are drunk. Fresh milk and chicken are taboo to women. A little hunting is done. Fishing is very important on rivers and Lake Victoria; dried fish are traded to the inland tribes.

Sex Division of Labor

Men tend the livestock and milk cattle, which are taboo to women and girls. Both sexes fish (women catch small fry) and engage in agriculture.

Property

Hoes, beads, iron wire, and brass rings and bracelets are valued, but livestock constitute the chief possessions. Land is owned by clans (localized lineages). Grazing lands are common. Individuals have the right to cultivate clan land, and acquire heritable but not salable usufruct to plots brought under cultivation.

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Inheritance is patrilineal--by sons, in default thereof by a Br. Most of man's property is allocated among his wives, the chief Wi having the largest share, and such allotted property is inherited by each wife's ElSo, who commonly gives his younger brothers a share. If the chief Wi has no sons, the ElSo of the second Wi inherits her and her share of the father's property.

Social Stratification

No source mentions slavery or important class distinctions.

Marriage

A substantial bride-price in cattle, sheep, and goats is paid in installments--formerly 20 cattle or more, today only about 7. Most go to bride's Fa, but her MoBr receives one heifer. After the initial installment (Hartmann says 2-3 cattle, Hobley 1 cow and 20 sheep) is paid, the bride is removed by mock capture to her new home. An alternative mode is marriage by elopement; it is considered shameful and is usually regularized by a subsequent bride-price.

Polygyny is general, and is very commonly sororal. The first Wi is chief Wi. Each co-wife has her own hut (sometimes in different settlements), and the Hu rotates; he may, however, spend more time with his favorite Wi than with the others. There is preferential sororate, with a reduced bride-price, and preferential levirate with BrWi. Hartmann reports that if a widow marries anyone other than her levirate spouse, her children belong to her deceased, not her new Hu.

Family

The patrilocal extended family, occupying a kraal is the residential norm. An ElSo nearly always remains in his father's kraal, but younger sons often set up new ones; however, they may, and frequently do remain with their Fa, sometimes even with their ElBr after the father's death.

Residence

Patrilocal residence is the norm--in the kraal of the groom's Fa for ElSo and some younger sons (Hartmann says in those cases where Fa contributes substantially to their bride-price). Younger

sons desiring independence commonly follow neolocal residence, setting up a new kraal in their father's community or sometimes moving to a new community. The unmarried boys after puberty live in a separate bachelors' hut in the kraal, unmarried girls in another under the supervision of an old woman. The girls visit the boys and have intra crura intercourse with them. A newly married couple lives in the men's bachelor hut of the groom's kraal until the first child is born, removing then to a hut of their own.

Kin Groups and Exogamy

Local exogamy is the rule because of clan localization and the wide extension of incest taboos.

All cousin marriages are forbidden. Unions are forbidden with known paternal kinsmen and with members of the lineages of Mo and MoMo.

There are numerous patri-sibs (dho-ot), of which one is dominant in each community. They were formerly exogamous and are still so in most instances, although unions between members of remote major lineages in large sibs is now permitted. Evans-Pritchard and Butt comment on the resemblance of the "segmentary lineage structure" to that of the Nuer.

Kinship Terminology

Fa--won. Mo, MoSi, MoBrDa--min. Hu--chwor. ElBr (m.s.)--kayo. Si (m.s.)--nyamin.

FaBr--omin won. MoBr--ner. FaSi--wa.

Cousin terminology is descriptive or of Sudanese type except for FaBrCh (owat) and MoBrDa (Omaha usage).

Settlement Pattern

Settlements consist of a cluster of hamlets, separated from others by strips of unoccupied territory. Each hamlet is a kraal, consisting of 10-50 huts irregularly grouped in polygynous (or small extended) family compounds around a cattle corral and surrounded by a thick circular euphorbia hedge, formerly often by a stone or mud wall. The huts are round with cylindrical walls of wattle-and-daub, conical thatched roofs, and floors usually sunk 18-24 inches below the surface of the ground. Butt confusingly calls the cluster of hamlets a "tribe").

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Community Organization

Each hamlet is a patri-family or localized minor patri-lineage. A cluster of hamlets is essentially a patrilocal clan-community since it is associated with and normally occupied by the males of a single sib or major patri-lineage. Not infrequently, however, there are present in the community a few retainers with their families; these establish "stranger lineages" or "in-law lineages," affiliated with the dominant lineage as its affines or "sisters' sons" since marriage is permitted with their members. The lower incisors of both sexes are extracted at puberty, but circumcision is not practiced. The sources make no mention of age-grades.

Local Government

The cluster of hamlets forming a community constitutes an autonomous political unit, within which compensation for murder occurs and there is provision for the settlement of feuds. It is also unified by association with a single dominant patri-sibs or major lineage. A member of the latter is "father of the land"; he settles land disputes and sacrifices to the sacred spear of the sib or lineage; he is advised by elders and heads of minor lineages or patri-families. There are also influential rich men, noted warriors, and ritual experts with divinatory and rain-making functions. Succession to office is patrilineal--by a So.

State

There are no paramount chiefs, even over sub-tribes. The local community (cluster of related hamlets) is politically autonomous.

Warfare

Intra-tribal warfare and cattle raiding are common.

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